

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

September 10, 2004

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Florida's Department of Agriculture estimates the state's agriculture industry has suffered \$2 billion in losses due to Hurricanes Charley and Frances. The magnitude of loss is especially acute because agriculture is a \$62 billion industry in Florida and the state takes in \$6.9 billion from the sale of farm products. That means the \$2 billion loss equals 30 percent of such farm gate receipts. Only four percent of crops in Florida receive federal subsidies in the first place, so the only safety net our agriculture producers have is a federal agriculture disaster package.

While the approximately \$300 million in Section 32 discretionary funds that were released for Florida agriculture are much appreciated, they only went to a portion of those commodities hurt by the hurricanes. Many of our commodities are not even eligible for the non-insured disaster assistance program (NAP) and cannot secure private insurance. Nurseries, Florida's top cash crop, suffered more than \$500 million in losses. Citrus growers, who will receive approximately \$225 million in Section 32 discretionary funds, incurred close to \$400 million in losses. Sod producers have incurred losses of \$300 million; and, timber industry losses approach \$150 million. With production stoppage and dumped milk, dairy producers have approximately \$12 million in losses. Vegetables like tomatoes, green peppers, snap beans, sweet corn and cucumbers have estimated losses of \$35 million. Tropical fruit, clams, oysters and poultry combined have losses of over \$22 million, and other industries have incurred smaller, but significant losses. Clearly, the need is great. The viability of our agriculture industry and the health of Florida's economy is at stake.

When you submit your second supplemental request to Congress, I urge you to include disaster assistance for these agricultural industries. I look forward to working with you to secure at least \$2.5 billion in federal disaster relief across many sectors, of which, at least \$1 billion should be directed to agriculture.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

